6: Vinci T-5 (1950) 1959 SQ18 Yanoama SQ18
Sanema
Makiritare SS 20

RED CLOTH AND GREEN FOREST

The day after our Makiritari crew had gone we betook ourselves and all our bags and baggage into a Shirian settlement. They were friendly people, somewhat scared of us, and attentive to our every move. All in all, we weren't sorry to have missed Frenario, who would undoubtedly have turned out to be some mangy and pretentious imbecile, lording it over everybody like some Asiatic despot. In talking about it to my companion, I summed up my attitude thus: 'If you're going among the Makiritari, take Makiritari with you. If you're going among Shirians, take Shirians.'

The itinerary we wanted to cover wasn't perfectly clear, even to ourselves: after all, our journey was taking us through one of the least explored parts of the world. But it was certain, at any rate, that we should be crossing territory inhabited by Shirians (especially Samatari and Guayca). It was even more certain that we should meet with no Makiritari or other people full of sweetness and light.

That same evening we picked out the men we wanted to take with us—though it would be more correct to say that we had them wished on us, because in this settlement, which lay hidden on the left bank of the Yevarehuri, five or six bends down, there weren't a great many Indians fit for the job. These were peaceable Shirians, but their living conditions were some of the most wretched we'd ever seen. It was really as if by the very fact of having given up their warlike habits, these people had forfeited their right to live as well as possible. From warriors, these people had gone to the extreme and become anchorites.

One man didn't want to come without bringing his wife and child—and the medicine-man!—along too. What was more, as crew-leader we had a man of middle age who was morally head of the little clan, and something more. His wife, with a baby boy at her breast, would also be coming. Then there were two boys, one of fifteen or so, the other of more tender years. Altogether it was the queerest crew two explorers of unknown territories could ever have put their faith in.

To gain time, we wanted to set out straight away, but our people gave us to understand that we must wait a day because they had something important to do. In the meantime, while ostensibly preparing the loads, they were anxious to have a good look at the equipment we were carrying. We let them get on with it, until they came to the pack containing the good old red cloth and other objects which might have been too much of a temptation for them: at this